



**Testimony
Betsy Gara, Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the
Education Committee
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The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), which represents 115 towns throughout Connecticut, appreciates the opportunity to comment regarding, **SB-944, An Act Establishing a Full-Day Kindergarten Requirement.**

For small towns, state aid to municipalities has been largely flat funded for several years. During this same time, the cost of providing critical municipal services, including education, has increased significantly. As a result, municipal budgets are stretched very thin and any new unfunded mandate on municipalities will force increases in property taxes or cuts to essential services.

COST therefore opposes SB-944, which mandates that all school districts implement full-day kindergarten programs for all students. Although we recognize that many school districts have been able to implement or phase-in implementation of full-day kindergarten, they have been able to do so when it made sense for their community. For example, many districts, taking advantage of declining enrollment that allowed them to realize considerable savings, were able to phase in implementation of kindergarten programs without significantly increasing their education budgets. Others made the decision about when to implement full-day kindergarten after careful consideration about the needs of their community and the cost to taxpayers.

SB-944 undermines the ability of local communities to make this decision in a way that makes sense for their communities. Rather than adopt another unfunded mandate, COST urges lawmakers to carefully consider the impact of the mandate on the educational programs and budgets of those communities that have not implemented full-day kindergarten for all students.

Thank you for your consideration.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns. More information is available at www.ctcost.org